



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

**NMFS Announces a Proposed Rule to Implement Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Amendment 18A;
Potential Changes in Permit Renewal Procedures for Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Limited
Access Swordfish and Shark Permit Holders**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued a proposed rule on May 18, 2006 (71 FR 28842), to implement Amendment 18A to the Fishery Management plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Amendment 18A addresses a number of issues; however, directly relevant for holders of Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) limited access swordfish and shark permits is a provision contained within the proposed rule to require annual permit application rather than application every two years.

Through the proposed rule to implement GOM Reef Fish Amendment 18A, NMFS is proposing to revise the renewal requirements applicable to all Magnuson-Stevens Act vessel permits, licenses, endorsements, and dealer permits issued by NMFS' Southeast Regional Office, including applicable HMS permits, to require submission of an application every year rather than requiring submission only every two years (*i.e.*, biennial application). NMFS believes that requiring an annual application would: provide better permit accountability, particularly regarding permit transfers; provide for better verification of permit application data; and simplify permit financial accounting through annual application payments. Fees for annual application would be half of the current biennial fee; therefore, there would be no increase in costs to applicants.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on July 3, 2006.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the proposed rule by any of the following methods:

- E-mail: 0648-AN09.Proposed@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line the following document identifier: 0648-AN09.
- Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the instructions for submitting comments.
- Mail: Peter Hood, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
- Fax: 727-824-5308; Attention: Peter Hood.

For further information pertaining to GOM Reef Fish Amendment 18A and HMS Limited Access Swordfish and Shark Permits, contact Russell Dunn at 727-824-5399 or Peter Hood at 727-824-5305.

Alan Risenhoover, Acting Director
Office of Sustainable Fisheries

6/5/06

Date

